

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 2, 7, 8, and 13-16 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 1, 5, 9, and 11 and include newly added claims 18 and 19 as follows:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for enhancing the filling capacity of tobacco material or tobacco additional material, wherein the material has an initial moisture of 10-30%, said process comprising the steps of:

treating the material within a pressure vessel with a treatment gas selected from the group consisting of nitrogen, argon, and mixtures thereof at pressures of 400 to 1,000 bar followed by a continuous decompression; and

subsequently thermally post-treating the discharged material, wherein during the process the filling density of the material in the pressure vessel is greater than 0.2 kg/dm^3 0.2 kg/dm³.

said step of treating the material presents a pressure time defined between the start of pressure buildup and decompression, said pressure time being at least 300 sec.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 1, wherein the material is mechanically compressed before, during or after the pressure vessel is filled.

4. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 3, wherein the material is heated before or during compression.

5. (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~Claim 2~~ Claim 1, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

6. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 5, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~Claim 8~~ Claim 3, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

10. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 9, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

11. (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~Claim 7~~ Claim 4, wherein the pressure vessel is rapidly pressurized such that at least some of the pressure time of at least 300 sec involves allowing the vessel to stand under pressure.

12. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 11, wherein after the vessel is allowed to stand, before the decompression, renewed pressurization is performed.

13-16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 1, wherein renewed pressurization is performed before the decompression.

18. (New) The process according to Claim 3, wherein renewed pressurization is performed before the decompression.

19. (New) The process according to Claim 4, wherein renewed pressurization is performed before the decompression.